

reading and somewhat more thinking, Hobbes is one of the most ancient acquaintances I have in the world, and of whom I have always a great esteem as one who, besides his eminent parts of learning and knowledge, hath been always looked upon as a man of probity and a life free from scandal/* To his teaching, however, Clarendon shows no mercy. Liberty, religion and justice were only empty words. Moreover, his theory of the contract did not even close the door to rebellion. If there were a revolt the ruler could not complain, for his subjects broke no promise to him. The historian of the Great Rebellion angrily denies that a usurper once possessed of the sceptre should be implicitly obeyed. If a subject might and must submit to a new ruler as soon as the old one was unable to protect him, loyalty was torn up by the roots. He concludes with a wish that it should be burned. "I never read any book which contained so much sedition, treason and impiety."

. The modern critic, standing above the fierce battles of the seventeenth century, would begin by challenging the historical and psychological foundations on which the system rests. The necessity for unfettered sovereignty is stated to lie in the unruly passions of sinful men as revealed in primitive society. But Hobbes knew nothing of the life of primitive communities, which has only been scientifically explored in our own time. His terrifying picture of a perpetual war of all against all is a mere nightmare. No community could live for a day in the condition he describes. For him there is no middle term between anarchy and despotism. He is unaware that custom preceded law, and that the sanction of the one is as potent as that of the other. He rightly rejects sentimental rhapsodies on the noble savage and the golden

age ; but he
was unaware that the elements of social life are
never absent
among hutrian beings, and that savages possess
standards of
morality without any political organization.
The unit of
primitive society is not, as he supposed, the
individual,
haunted by perpetual fear of his life, but the
family or some
other recognized group ; and life is more
fettered by tradition
than that of England under the Stuart kings. A
more complex
organization was evolved, not because the
conditions were
intolerable, but owing to the emergence of new
needs and
aptitudes, stimulated by peaceful or hostile
intercourse with
neighbouring communities. For Hobbes man,
though gre-
garious, is neither a moral nor a political animal
In focusing